To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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Vision and Values in Today's Rural Home Life

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By Lita Bane*

With world forces abroad which would push us more and more toward materialism, we might well consider the values by which we live and the role of the home economist in helping to foster these values.

From the beginning, home economics has been closely related to agriculture in the extension program -- so closely related in some instances that home economics stood in danger of losing its identity and representing rather those phases of production commonly carried on by farm women: gardens, poultry, canning, and the rest. As a matter of fact, at an early regional conference a state leader, and a competent one, after telling about their project on building a new kind of chicken coop, closed her talk by saying, "We are building on a broad foundation and for eternity." Not long ago I came across my notes made at that meeting, and I had added the question, "By building chicken coops?" Now, we may begin by building chicken coops, but as home economists having faith in the ideals of our profession, we dare not stop there for the ultimate human values are spiritual and not material ones.

Today finds us still closely related to agriculture because, in the main, we are working with farm women. Much of our work for some time will doubtless continue to be with them, but there seems to be a handwriting on the wall that eventually all homemakers, city and country, will insist upon having professional advice in their homemaking. If it does not come through existing agencies, I believe new organizations and services will have to be set up. In the main, home economics extension has undoubtedly been better off because of its close relation to agriculture, in spite of the struggle to maintain our identity and our independence of action. Far-sighted agriculturists, like far-sighted industrialists, realize that the final reason for their existence is to keep up a constant and adequate flow of goods and services to homes.

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*Professor Lita Bane, Department of Home Economics, University of Illinois. It would be hard to overemphasize the significance of the family and its ideals in today's rural world. We are especially grateful to Miss Bane for sharing her observations with the members of The Christian Rural Fellowship.

TO LIVE MORE WISELY

The 1940 Yearbook of Agriculture says, "Hitherto the problems of commercial farmers have almost completely dominated agricultural thinking and policy These problems still bulk very large, as they should, but they no longer tell the whole story."

"All of our attention was concentrated on the science of material things. But the greatest discoveries about gasoline, steel, rubber, fertilizers, bacteria, insects, however much they contribute to better production, tell us little about how to live wisely. In fact, they often complicate living enormously -- individual living and social living. Seeing the effects of this complication, we have come to realize that there are other great areas about which we are badly in need of scientific knowledge. We need to know a great deal more about such vital problems as what kind of environment human beings need for their best development; how to create such an environment; why we human beings so often make a mess of our affairs in spite of all our great achievements."

Let's first consider the "vision" part of our title. Vision implies perspective, and so I suggest that we take a quick look into the past. A man's culture, we are told, can be judged by the number and kind of his interests.

In the beginning, man's physiological needs and urges determined much of his activity. His needs were met by the simple means at his disposal. Throug the years these means have been greatly elaborated and refined, and the specific needs have been studied by persons we now designate as scientists. Emotional and intellectual needs must have been recognized all along by humankind for they developed ceremonials, religious and artistic expressions in great variety, and writing and language. Our culture is a vast mosaic of small patterns developed through the ages in part by design, no doubt, but largely by trial and error and necessity.

Through this very trial and error method, which in some areas we now control and dignify by the name "research," human knowledge has greatly increased Nevertheless, we are sometimes so conscious of all the things we do not know that we forget how much more we do know from one age to the next. If you feel the need to renew your faith in the progress we have made, I suggest you read again Frazer's Golden Bough. We have come a long way from the superstitions, taboos, myths, and magic of those days.

And as a kind of background, may I draw to your attention some things that thoughtful people have said, in which I believe there are valuable suggestions for us.

THE MEANS AND THE END

A long time ago Adam Smith declared, "Consumption is the sole end and purpose of production." John Ruskin once said, "Consumption is the end, crown, and perfection of production, and wise consumption is a far more difficult art than wise production." The choice and use of so-called "consumption goods" is, of course, one of the great responsibilities of today's homemaker.

Skipping over intervening years to the present, we find President Hutchins saying, "We must now learn that material goods are a means and not an end. We want them to sustain life, but they are not the aim of life. The aim of life

is the fullest development of the highest powers of men. This means art, religion, education, moral and intellectual growth.

"In the interest of human dignity we need a rising standard of health, character, and intelligence. These positive goals demand the devotion and sacrifice of every American. We should rebuild one-third of the nation's homes. We must provide adequate medical care in every corner of the land. We must develop an education aimed at moral and intellectual growth instead of at making money."

In our foggy, strife-torn, weary world one wishes that somehow it could be arranged that we might pause for breath and a little quiet thought before plunging from one world-shaking experience into the next. Depression, war, atomic bomb, sudden end of the shooting war, the beginning of a world-wide "cold war," and now the myriad complications in the effort to bring real peace to what we are now painfully conscious must be <u>one</u> world, if there is to be any world at all. But there can be no such pause.

Our personal responsibilities are in some measure delineated for us. With every other inhabitant of our globe we are forced to think in terms of international relations and the common good which includes the whole human race. This calls for a tremendous stretching of our imaginations and our sympathies and a great need to be as accurately and broadly informed as possible. Quite as important -- and in many ways more painful -- it calls for a critical examination of our prejudices, our pet intolerances, our fundamental concepts of what true democracy really is and where it begins. Someone has said that we all believe in democracy but that each person wants to be an aristocrat. One sometimes suspects that there is enough truth in this statement to make us feel just a little uncomfortable.

Then, there are race problems, relations of labor and industry, problems in the field of general educational policy, problems of government <u>vs</u>. private enterprise, problems of developing more authorities following the TVA pattern, problems of maintaining farm prices, extending rural electrification, enormous and complex problems of housing -- all important ones -- and you could extend the list on and on.

SCIENCE IS NOT ENOUGH

However, suppose we take a close-up look at homes -- those institutions for whose benefit we, as home economists, are expending our time, energy, and talents. Lots of things happen in homes, important things. Many of them center about the physical needs of the human race for food, shelter, and clothing, and we need not apologize for our interest in these needs. We should feel apologetic, however, if we consider only the <u>physical</u> needs that food, shelter, and clothing satisfy and forget the human hungers for security, affection, recognition, new experience, aesthetic enjoyment, and a sense of achievement which are often met at the same time with these same tools of food, clothing, and shelter. Undoubtedly they could be much more completely met if we were to give more thought to the values which should sustain our efforts.

We have been captivated by the possibilities of better human relations and better mental health, and we have forgotten that these do not operate in a vacuum but are connected, more often than not, with the very things we have been studying and teaching for these many years.

Our heightened emotions and our tortures of uncertainty and anxiety have turned us to family life with almost fanatical faith in its power to heal and guide and comfort and make life worth the living. At the same time we see marriages dissolved; family life disintegrated and degraded before our very eyes.

With disciplined minds and hearts we must join the search to distinguish the eternal from the outworn. This calls for more research in all areas. Our faith and hope tell us that there are eternal values in home living.

We shall need to remind ourselves that, though they make few banner headlines, homes are important. There is ample proof that family living is one of the chief sources of human happiness. I believe Mr. Hoover was right when he said, "The unit of American life is the family and the home. It is the economic unit as well as the moral and spiritual unit. But it is more than this. It is the beginning of self-government. It is the throne of our highest ideals. It is the source of the spiritual energy of our people."

Let's not scorn food, shelter, clothing, and house furnishings. With them as our instruments let us build toward finer human relationships which seem to be the greatest single need of the moment. Let's not be afraid of the words freedom, democracy, peace, one world, spiritual energy -- even truth, goodness, and beauty -- remembering that in miniature many, and perhaps most, of the problems that beset the world beset the family, and as families try to solve their problems so do nations try to work out their destinies. We need to remind ourselves, too, that friendships are between people before they can be between nations, and they are likely to be built up in rather old-fashioned ways.

A PATTERN OF SERVICE

We have doubtless all been interested in the way Dr. Albert Schweitzer has combined into one lifetime both scholarship and competence in music, religion, philosophy, science, medicine, and the skill of a surgeon. Few have his ability, but all can profit by observing his scale of values and his use of his training in the service of mankind. The world-wide interest in his life and work indicates a resurgence of one of the oldest of values -- service to humankind born out of a new faith in life and reverence for it.

Returning for a moment to the educational program Dr. Schweitzer mapped out for himself, we can see in it a whole set of values for well-balanced, orderly creative living. Important as science has shown itself to be, and impossible as it is to accurately compare values, it is written so plainly that everyone should see: science is not enough. Art, religion, and philosophy must play increasingly important roles if we are to have a sane world. Nor can we overlook the salutory effects of manual skill. Its value in the material world is too obvious to need comment. But one has only to observe its use in the cure of mental and nervous patients to wonder, "Why not make use of it in prevention as well as in cure?" Think of the vast and varied possibilities home activities offer for the use of skills. I hope someone will explore this field with our modern research methods. The results should show us what to include in our teaching program and where best to put our emphasis.

I was once asked by a debating team, doomed to wrestle with the old question of vocational versus cultural education, what my definition of a cultural course was. To their obvious surprise my answer was that I considered any course

taught by a cultured person a cultural course, whether it had to do with potatoes or poetry. The strained relation between the two seems to me to be something artificial and unfortunate, for they need not be mutually exclusive.

As you can see, the values fairly tumble over one another as we view the broader implications of our daily work. I have not tried to list specific values for you. It is for each of us to winnow out those values which promise to be of eternal worth and work toward realizing them for ourselves and for others to the best of our ability.

As we envision the future of our world, it becomes clear that we need the fullest possible non-material development. This implies interest in art, religion, education, and intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth.

In closing I should like to say Godspeed and trust that we may make our own that fine ideal set up years ago by Mrs. Ellen H. Richards when she urged that we, as home economists, help people control the material things that lie about them in order that they may have time and energy to make life beautiful and gracious and worthwhile.

AN AIM FOR THE HOMEMAKER

To have the home:

Economically sound...

Mechanically convenient...

Physically healthful ...

Socially responsible...

Spiritually inspiring...

Founded upon mutual affection and respect.

Morally wholesome...

Mentally stimulating...

Artistically satisfying...

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